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"WORDSWORTH'S CONCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF GOD TO THE WORLD"

A Dissertation
Submitted to the B.D. Committee of the
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In candidacy for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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INTRODUCTION

In leading up to the subject, with which this paper is concerned, a brief consideration of the conceptions represented by the terms Deism, Pantheism and Theism will be undertaken. It will also be necessary to note the general character of the century, of which Wordsworth was the product. The influences which had most effect upon him, in the development of his thought will also be considered.

From Wordsworth's poetry, especially his autobiographical poem, "The Prelude", a study of his theological conceptions will be made, with special reference to his understanding of the relationship of God to the World. The thesis to be attempted is, that this conception of the relationship of the Supreme Being to his creation, is best described by the doctrine of Theism in which His Immanence finds complete expression.

SECTION A

VARIOUS WAYS OF CONCEIVING THE RELATIONSHIP OF GOD TO THE WORLD

There are three main ways in which man has conceived the relationship of the supreme being to the world. These may be represented by the terms, Pantheism, Deism and Theism. The ascendency of the conception, represented by any one of these terms, has been largely due, to the scientific, or philisophical outlook which has held the field, at that particular period of time. Each view has had its day of popularity, and then was replaced by another, or has been modified in the direction of some other.

Deism emphasizes the transendence of the supreme being as above, and apart, from the world; as man understands it. It represents God as the creator of the world, but not active within it. Pantheism is the opposite view to Deism, and presents the idea, of God as active in the universe, its life, and its processes, and completely limited by it. Theism seeks to preserve the essential truth contained in each of the opposing views maintaining, the independent existance of God, Transendent, and apart, from the world, yet at the same time active within it, in its life and processes.

Historically, the transendent conception of the supernatural comes first. It is the general view of

God which dominated the religious beliefs of the Old Testament, though there were occassional glimpses of the dawn of a more intimate way of conceiving his relationship to man, and the world. By the time the New Testament was written, the idea of transendence had become more pronounced through the influence of Hellenistic thought. In Hellenism, God and the world, are separated by a wide, and forbidding gulf, and the dualism of this way of conceiving the universe, sets mind against matter, the natural against the supernatural, the finite against the infinte. The only way in which God has any contact with the world, or makes himself mainfest within it, is through the medium of miracle. For the christian community, Christ was a connecting link between God, and the world. His miracles were manifestations of his divine nature, and his advent was understood in the light of the miracleous; and the complete transendense of the character of God was maintained. Union of the believer with God was possible through belief, with the consequent deification of our human, and corruptible nature.

"The fourth evangelist thinks of the divinizing union as established through knowledge. But in the subsequent development this idea is overshadowed

by the idea of a union of substances. Perhaps the most outstanding contribution of the Greek Fathers -we do not here assess its permenant value- was its conception of the Divine as a transendent, supernatural substance. As opposed to creaturely substance, which is derivative, mutable, and corruptable. Divine substance has the attributes of uncreatedness, immutability, and incorruptability. The relation between the two is thus one of complet disparity." (1)

Thus the complete ascendence of the idea of transendence in the early christian theology is evidenced even in relation to the coming, and the mission, of Christ. It was maintained throughout early and medieval christianity.

The way was opened up for a modification of the extreme transendent view in the teaching of Luther, (1483-1546) who emphesized the importance of faith in 'Christ alone'. The life of God comes into the life of the believer through his faith in Christ, who is the manifestation of God's grace. Thus the Hellenistic conception gave way for the moment, before a more ethical view of the relation of God to the world and He was brought a little closer to the world.

(1) "The Nature and Right of Religion" Prof. W. Morgan p 144.

But the reformation did not do away with transendent theology, for the bible which came in for a new importance, through the revolt, was itself a super-natural gift of a transendent God. Miracle continued to be the important way in which God manifested his presence and gave assurance of his reality. As long as miracles were accepted without question this view of transendence was maintained. If anything happens, to throw discredit on the miracle then this avenue through which God invades the world is blocked and contact with him becomes impossible unless the tran-sendent conception gives way to some other view.

With the coming of the scientific view of the universe, miracles came to be thought of in a new way, in fact, they were confronted with a challenge as to the truth of their reality at all. "And finally, there came forward, to realize the new possibilities in the way of knowledge, a brilliant group of scientists of the first magnitude - Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, Galilio, Kepler, and others - whose investigations gave a firm foundation to those scientific methods and conceptions which were destined to enter so vitally into all future thought..... God could no longer be conceived as having his local habitation in the heavens; the whole geography of the spiritual world was thrown into

confusion, and the way opened for a deeper conception of God's relation to the universe." (1)

This new way of conceiving the relation of God to the world was not popular in ecclesiastical circles, and because he sponsored these views, Bruno was burned at the stake in Rome in the year 1600. But the scientific view of the world, was not to be turned aside, by the displeasure of the church, and it gained ground steadily, until, by the eighteenth century it was generally accepted. With the establishing of the conception of the reign of law throughout the universe, a severe blow was dealt to belief in miracles. If the transendent view of the supreme being was to remain, and the only avenue through which he is manifest in the world is closed, his connection with the world must be severed altogether. This was done in the development of Deism, according to which, God was thought of merely as the power which had created the world and had no further connection with it. This scientific view with its consequent rationalism which brought about such a remote view of God, landed man in a condition which was spiritually unsatisfying. Religion could scarcely be expected to thrive on such a view.

(1) "Students History of Philosophy" Rogers. p 226.

Without contact with the divine it would soon perish. The church persisted in ignoring the new findings and clung to belief in the miracleous as long as it could, but could not hope to do so indefinitely. A number of movements throughout the church protested with a measure of success, and the transendent view of God in his relation to the world has never altogether faded from the mind of man. While Deism was on the throne of human intellect, in the eighteenth century, the Wesleyan Revival, the Catholic Revival, the evangelical movement in Scotland, the evangelical and neo-Catholic movements in the church of England were dominated by a transendent theology which frowned upon the findings of science.

However, another view was developed by those who accepted the scientific outlook of the universe, but revolted against the unsatisfying theology of Deism. Its vagueness and consequent unreality drove them to the opposite view, namely, Pantheism. Some went as far as Pantheism, others who did not go quite so far, found satisfaction in the view of Immanence. A very important tendency towards the view of Immanence, is found in the philosophy of Spinoza (1632-1677). He received two titles as a result of his views, 'athiest' from one side, from the other 'God-intoxicated'.

"The central idea of Spinoza, and that which gave him his deep influence somewhat later on, when the period of the Enlightenment was drawing to a close, was his recognition of the unity of things; and not only as an intellectual necessity, but as a requirement of feeling, a religious requirement as well. Descartes had split the world up into two substances distinct from each other, and God separate from them both. The Rationalism which took its rise from him, tended still further to remove God from the world, until he became a mere far-away observer, with scarcely any relation to his work. Such a separation was fatal in two ways. It emptied the idea of God, on the one hand of all content, and so made him superfluous; and it rendered it impossible to give any ultimate and unitary explanation of the world of things. In opposition to this, it was Spinoza's task to insist upon the connection of God with the world, and to find in him the ultimate reality, alongside which the independent reality of other so-called substances fades into nothingness." (1) While to many, the Pantheism of Spinoza is as spiritually unsatisfying as the doctrines of Deism, he opened up the way for a most fruitful view of the universe, in the doctrine of

(1) "Students History of Philosophy" Rogers p 280.

Divine Immanence. Those who came after him were influenced by him to a view of God present in the universe, in its processes, in nature and in man; yet not limited by it or completely confined to it. "The earliest exponents of the immanence idea were the Romantic poets and the writers who stood under their influence- Rousseau, Goethe, Wordsworth, Shelley, Carlyle, Emerson.....What the poets possessed as an intuition, the philosophers - Fichte, Schelling, Hegel - established on a reasoned basis - not everywhere secure - and worked out into a system. By Schleiermacher, and later on by Schweitzer, the new idea was carried into theology." (1)

The doctrine of Immanence is so close to that of Pantheism that it is difficult to keep them apart at all times. When we think of God in the life we see around us in nature, and in man it is quite easy, almost natural, to fall into a pantheistic view, and allow the thought of his transendence to slip out of our thinking. "An unguarded pantheism may not be religiously offensive, at least not obviously so, so long as religious feeling is of the aesthetic kind to which the poets have usually limited themselves.

(1) "Nature and Right of Religion" Prof. Morgan p 158

But it is otherwise when we have to do with ethical piety. With that anything like thoroughgoing pantheism is absolutely irreconcilable." (1)

From this consideration of these various ways in which man has thought of God's relationship to the world, it is evident that in each conception some basic truth was struggling for expression. Deism with its tendency to emphasize the transendent phase, contained the truth that God, while he is the creator of the universe, is not to be completely confined within it,. He is greater than his creation and not to be bound or limited by it. Pantheism contains the truth - as important as the transendent truth - that God having created the universe could not stand aside from it, but, to some degree must be sought, and can be found active in those resident forces at work throughout that universe. The extreme fallacy to which Deism went dismissed God from his creation and set up a dualism which is mentally and spiritually unsatisfying. The fallacy to which Pantheism sometimes reached, was that it destroyed the freedom and the personality of God. Theism with its basis in the idea of Immanence, retained the idea of transendence preserving both truths in a new synthesis.

(1) Nature and Right of Religion" Prof. Morgan p 161

"The presence of God rules Deism out, and the freedom of God rules Pantheism out. That 'all is God' is not true, that 'God is all' is not true. The truth is that 'from him and through him and in him are all things', God is source of all, and Lord of all."

"Outline of Christian Theology" Prof. W. N. Clark
p. 130.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The eighteenth century, though not marked by outstanding greatness, is a very interesting one and not without a measure of importance in the story of England, and Anglo-Saxon people generally. It was a time of mixed movements, a time when powerful forces were working beneath the surface of the ordinary affairs of life. The Revolution of 1688 which had banished the last of the Stewart kings, and called William of Orange to the throne, marks the end of the long struggle for political freedom in England. Thereafter Englishmen spent the tremendous energy, which their forefathers had spent largely in fighting for freedom, in endless political discussion, and in efforts to improve governments. In the sphere of government, the attention of the leaders was focused upon the various ways and means of educating the masses to certain political ideas. This period saw the beginning of the newspaper. The daily Curant was first published in London in the year 1702. Another development, though of minor importance in itself, was suggestive of the new turn in the social life of the country; it was the growth of a large number of coffee-houses, two thousand of which were opened in London alone. These were centers of sociability and provided places for the discussion

of every conceivable topic, political, economic or religious. The growth of social life, and intercourse, naturally tended to minimize some of the strong antagonisms which had so imbittered men in previous times.

In the eighteenth century along with the general diffusion of knowledge, there was a widespread interest in natural science. This knowledge was spread by public lectures, through libraries, and by a new agent, the encyclopaedia.

In this period ethics were placed largely on the basis of reasonableness, and tended towards formality. Morals generally were at a low ebb, while in the upper classes a shallow formality predominated, with the mass of the people license prevailed. "It is inconceivable that the world of the eighteenth century could have produced a Jesus of Nazareth, a Gautama, a Francis of Assisi, an Ignatius of Lyola. If one may imagine an eighteenth century John Huss, it is impossible to imagine anyone with sufficient passion to burn him." (1) Yet forces were at work beneath the surface of life in England which were to issue in matters of great importance.

Because of their bearing on the general theme of this paper, the outstanding features of the scientific, philosophical, theological, and literary trends of the century will be noted briefly.

(1) "Outline of History" H. G. Wells P. 812.

I SCIENTIFIC

Reference has already been made, to the fact that the scientific view of the world had come to be generally accepted. Except for those who protested in the name of orthodox religion, the world had graduated from the conceptions of the middle ages. No greater revolution could be thought of than, that, which would naturally follow the work of such men as Copernicus, Galileo, or Kepler. Their findings had undermined the view of Scolasticism, and had laid the foundation for an entirely new conception of the universe. The universe became more interesting because it was capable of being understood, and was subject to definite laws.

A very important instrument for the promotion of science was supplied by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) when he replaced the 'a priori' syllogistic reasoning of the Scholastics with the inductive method. Bacon thought "theories and opinions and common notions so far as can be obtained from the stiffness, and firmness of the mind, should be entirely done away with, and that the understanding should begin anew plainly and fairly with particulars, since there is no other entrance open to the kingdom of nature than to the kingdom of heaven, into which no one may enter except in the form of a little child."

"Novum Organum" quoted from Roger's "Student Hist of Philosophy" page 238.

While the inductive method was important and served to do away with a false method of reasoning, it neglected the importance of 'scientific imagination', and scientific hypothesis. Hobbes (1588-1679) supplemented the achievement of Bacon by stressing the importance of deduction in arriving at scientific truth. Descartes (1596-1650), further assured the future of the scientific method by laying great stress on the validity of thought itself. He went so far as to make thought the basis of being in his famous phrase 'cogito ergo sum'.

Spinoza (1632-1677) carried the tendency which was to enhance the scientific view, a step farther, in stressing the importance of unity in thought. The philosophical speculations of Leibnitz, Locke and Berkeley all tended to strengthen this new way of thinking which was to bring into its completeness the modern view of life, and the universe.

Thus by the eighteenth century, the general scientific view is rooted, and while the century is not marked by any great scientific discovery comparable to that of Darwin (1809-1882), in the nineteenth century, it was a time when the whole trend of things provided favourable preparation for such a discovery. The pioneer scientists had been assisted by a new and revolutionary

way of thinking. The seed had been sown, and the soil had been prepared, the scientific harvest was inevitable.

- II PHILOSOPHICAL -

The philosophical tendencies of the eighteenth century may be said to center around the names of Berkeley (1685-1753), Hume (1711-1776), Rousseau (1712-1778), Voltaire (1694-1778).

The philosophy of the seventeenth century might be described by the term Rationalism, that of the eighteenth century was slightly different and is characterized by the term Empiricism. In England Locke, Berkeley, and Hume were grouped under this heading. Empirical philosophy is highly introspective. The confidence which had been placed in reason, and the validity of thought in general, gave way to a sort of criticism of them. The question was faced, where do ideas or thoughts come from? Locke showed that we have no innate ideas, but that the mind is like a blank sheet of paper, upon which experience through the senses writes the ideas. This type of philosophy could not escape the charge of materialism. Bishop Berkeley swung away from this materialistic view, and showed that the mind could not perceive matter, but ideas only, which are derived from sensations. According to

Berkeley the only reality that we know is mind, and matter is simply a condition of mind. This was a refutation of the materialism of Locke, while the general view of knowledge was the same, namely, the experience of the senses. David Hume went farther than Berkeley. While Berkeley destroyed matter, Hume seemed to destroy mind. In his absolute scepticism man and science came under a cloud of undependibility thus empiricism had led man into a blind alley.

While the empiricism of these philosophers ended thus in a thin scepticism, another movement of a more practical nature was taking shape in both France and England. This movement represented a spirit of liberty guided by reason and contained little reverance for traditional institutions. It resented established authority in a church or a form of society. It was highly critical of entheusiam and emotionalism. It was a movement of emancipation and its instrument was the critical intellect. It was marked by two main features, the deistic movement and the development of ethical theory. "Deism was an attempt to get rid of the supposed irrational elements of Christianity. It began with a desire to explain away the mysteries of church dogma, and to show that between reason and revelation there is no contradiction." (1)

(1) Roger's "Student History of Philosophy" P 387

However the exaltation of reason soon tended to do away with the necessity for revelation, consequently there was a rise of so-called 'natural religion'. As already noted the main feature of Deism is, that it removes the deity from any connection with the world except, as its creator. This idea of course brought down the condemnation of the authorities in the church, though it continued to be a common way of thinking about God, and his relation to the world, in the eighteenth century.

The second characteristic of the enlightenment was the development of ethical theory. The natural effect of Deism was to reduce religion to a life of moral conduct. In this development of ethical theory a number of motives were to be found. Sometimes the motive of pure self-interest dominated, while at other times this is replaced by a desire for true harmony. We have the expression of Paley's definition of virture, "the happiness of mankind is obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness". However there was some development in the direction of utilitarianism, and the motive of self seeking was not wholly acceptable.

In France, the spirit of the enlightenment was introduced by Voltaire (1694-1778), who had been touched, while in England, by the teachings of Locke.

His influence was reflected in the work of an outstanding group of men who were called Encyclopaedist. In France as in England the movement was marked by the genius of Deism, though in France much more antagonism was aroused as it conflicted with the authority of both church and state.

While Empiricism in England had ended in the scepticism of Hume, in France it took the form of the spirit of deism, but it ended in practical atheism, and for God it substituted Nature. "Nature says to man 'thou art free' and no power on earth can lawfully strip thee of thy rights. Religion cries to him that 'he is a slave condemned to groan under the rod of God's representatives." (1) This was a fairly accurate representation of the attitude of the French enlightenment toward religion.

About this time there came into prominence a man who was to be the forerunner of a most important movement diametrically opposed to the whole rationalistic outlook, his name was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). While he possessed some of the concepts produced in the Enlightenment, he swung away from its materialism and atheism. He cried out for the absolute freedom of man from all bonds of tradition in any form. His thought

(1) Rogers "Students History of Philosophy" p 398.

was dominated by the idea 'back to nature back to the natural man'. Reason must give way to that supreme human faculty Feeling. In the sphere of theology he maintained that reason always leads to scepticism, but feeling to belief in God, and Immortality.

The extreme ideas of Rousseau were incorporated in the doctrines of the French Revolution, but they found a better soil and produced a richer harvest in Germany, where in the person of Lessing they emerged in a new and fruitful view of life, of the world, and of the divine. According to his view, God was no longer conceived in the cold methods of rationalism, as a deity far removed from the world, but is seen as "actually present and energizing, in nature, in the course of human events, and in the heart of the spiritual experience, while all have their reality and unity in Him ." (1) Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Goethe (1749-1832) expresses a similar idea in his works.

(1) "Students History of Philosophy" Rogers p 410

- III THEOLOGICAL -

The theological characteristics of the eighteenth century are closely interwoven with the philosophical. The outstanding theological idea in liberal circles was the doctrine of Deism, with its extreme transendent conception of God. Over against this view there was that of the orthodox theologian, who while his conception of God was also one of transendence, held to the reality of God's relation to the world through the avenue of the miracleous. The influence of Spinoza and his followers was still felt and threatened to break out with new vitality towards the end of the century.

- IV RELIGIOUS -

The religious life of the century follows naturally from the theological, and philosophical ideas which held the field. On one hand, the distinctive thing about the religion of the time was its cold formalism and emphesis on ethical culture, which was in bondage to human reason. "The sermons of the time were almost always written, and the prevailing taste was cold, polished and fastidious." "As is always the case, the habits prevailing in other spheres at once acted on, and were influenced by religion. The selfishness, the corruption, the worship of expediency, the scepticism as to all higher motives

that characterized the politicians of the school of Walpole; the heartless cynicism reigning in fashionable life,,which is so clearly reflected in the letters of Horace Walpole and Chesterfield; the spirit of a brilliant and varied contemporary literature, eminently distinguished for its sobriety of judgment and for its fastidious purity and elegance of expression, but for most part deficient in depth, in passion, and in imagination, may all be traced to popular theology. Sobriety and good sense were the qualities most valued in the pulpit, and entheusiasm and extravagance were those which were most dreaded." (1)

As a counteraction to this cold formalism in religion, the century developed a most important influence in the Methodist Revival, one of the outstanding events in the religious history of England. The Revival coming at a time when economic conditions tended to divide the rich and the poor by an ever widening gulf, brought the common man into a place of prominence in human interest. The Revival had no part in the Deism of the time, but restored to all rich and poor alike a sense of the reality, and nearness of God, and united all to Him in the relationship of a new and intimate experience. While the movement was occassionally marked by

(1) "Hist of Eng. in Eighteenth Century" Lecky V III p 51

excesses, and while its theological background was somewhat primative, it restored warmth and life to religion in England. Thus with two extreme types of religious life, one cold and formal with a very remote conception of God, the other marked by extreme entheusiasm and miracleous conception of the divine, there were many people who found little satisfaction in either point of view.

- V LITERARY -

In considering the literature of eighteenth century England, two words stand out as representing the character of its expression, Classicism and Romanticism. The term Classicism or Augustan denotes, that type of literature of the century as expressed in the writings of such men as Pope, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Burk. It represented the type of writing in which great stress is placed on the form of expression. "The general tendency of literature was to look at life critically, to emphasize intellect rather than imagination, the form rather than the content of the sentence. Writers strove to repress all emotion and entheusiasm and to use only precise and elegant methods of expression". (1) This type of literature was to fall short of true greatness, which cannot be confined to strict rules and forms, to the impoverishment of content, but rather breaks

(1) "English Literature" Wm. J. Long PhD. p 263.

through them by the power ofnits immagination and inspiration.

The other important term to be reckoned with in eithteenth century literature is Romanticism. This term denotes the spirit in which the cold forms of Classicism were broken. The roots of the movement, which was to mature in the nineteenth century, are found mingled with the classic tendencies of the period preceding it. The Romantic movement was revived during the eighteenth century in the works of James Tomson (1700-1748) Thomas Gray (1716-1771) William Cowper (1731-1800) Robert Burns (1759-1796).

Because of the important relationship of Romanticism to this thesis, its main features are noted here.

Victor Hugo defined Romanticism as "liberalism in literature" The movement can be characterized broadly by the word freedom. The early Romantic poets - mentioned above reflect in their work the struggle between the Romantic and the Classic spirits. The new wine was bursting the old wineskins.

Dr. Wm. Long in his book, "English Literature" gives six main characteristics of the Romantic phase of literature.

First - It is always marked by a strong protest against the bondage of rule and custom which tend

generally to 'fetter the free human spirit'.

Second - In the movement there is a return to nature and to humanity for its material. "The seasons" by Tomson shows this characteristic very plainly especially the tendency to a new interest in nature.

Third - It brought to life again the dreamer of a golden age, in which the ideals of youth take precedence over the sterner realities of life.

Fourth - The movement is marked by a new tenderness and human sympathy, it exalts the sympathetic heart above the reason and intellect. There is a cry against human oppression, especially in the writings of Burns.

Fifth - There is a strong tendency by reason of the freedom of the movement to develop greater individuality.

Sixth - There is in this movement - while it is liberal in spirit and tends to break away from rule - a profound reverence for the past, and the old masters, it draws much of its inspiration from Spencer, Shakespere, and Milton.

The presentation of the general character of Romantic poetry serves as an introduction to the poet whose thought is to be studied here, for in his work the expression of Romanticism reached its height.

SECTION THREE

THE INFLUENCES WHICH PLAYED A PART IN MOULDING WORDSWORTH'S THEOLOGICAL IDEAS

In this section consideration will be given to the development of Wordsworth's mind, with special reference to those influences which had a marked effect upon him and his thinking. The main source of this information is his work "The Prelude", which presents his own account of the development of his thought.

I PARENTS, SCHOOL, NATURE

In evaluing the influences which go to make or marr a man, it is natural to begin with a consideration of his home and parents. In the case of Wordsworth, there is not a great deal to note in this connection. His mother died when he was eight years of age, and his father when he was fourteen. Of his father he has told us nothing in his poems. However he devotes some lines to his mother, and from these it is clear she exerted a happy influence upon him in those tender impressionable years.

> She, not falsely taught,
> Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
> Than shaping novelties for times to come,
> Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
> Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
> Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
> Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
> Doth also for our nobler part provide,
> Under His great correction and control,
> As innocent instincts, and as innocent food;

.....

Such was she - not from faculties more strong
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign. (1)

The influence of this gracious lady of simple faith, was an important factor in the childhood of the poet, it could not be otherwise.

Wordsworth as a child was particularily sensitive to Nature, and while he never graduated from this sensitiveness, in those early years there is little doubt that nature had more influence over him than any other phase of his experience. The Prelude opens with these lines.

O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields and from the azure sky.
What e'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me. (2)

None could be more grateful than he in all the moods of Nature which he so well understood. They were for his a source of joy, which at times knew no bounds and seemed to defy expression.

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,

(1) Prelude Bk V L 267-277, 288-293
(2) " Bk I L 1-6

And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes amonge the hills and groves.(1)

Though a soft west wind
Ruffled the waters to the anglers wish
For a whole day together, have I lain
Down by thy side O derwent! murmuring stream,
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
And there have read, devouring as I read,
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
I to the sport betook myself again. (2)

While, as a boy he was fond of reading, the first place in his affections was held by Nature.

In these early days of childhood he possessed a sense of liberty. He lived so much in the open with the spaciousness of Nature, that all the Romantic tendencies found in nature, played upon him. He says

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virture, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. (3)

(1) Prelude Bk I L 269-281
(2) " Bk V 480-490
(3) " Bk V 538-545

I at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart; (1)

In the light of these passages, it is certain that in Nature, Wordsworth in these early years had come in close touch with one of the greatest influences of his whole experience. The impressions made upon him could never die, but would become a part of his philosophy of life, or colour it completely.

The freedom of the grammar school at Hawkshead, which he attended from 1778-1787, was a factor in allowing Nature to have full play upon his young life. "Wordsworth described the time spent at Hawkshead as the happiest most fruitful period of his life." (2) A reference to one of his teachers shows the happy influence this school period had been.

This faithful guide, speaking from his deathbed,
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
But said to me, 'My head will soon lie low;'
And when I saw the turf that covered him
After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite.....

(1) Prelude II L 394-405
(2)"Early Life of Wordsworth" E.Legois p 29

He loved the poets, and, if now alive,
Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, not belying the kind hope
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs. (1)

A reference to the lady at whose cottage he boarded in his school days shows another influence which went to make his school days happy, and free, and rich.

Glad welcome had I with some tears perhaps,
From my old dame, so kind and motherly,
While she perused me with a parents pride.
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
Upon thy grave, good creature. (2)

The influence of Nature, the freedom and the pleasure of his school life enriched by the kindly maternal care of Anne Tyson, made of this period a time of spiritual growth unhampered by repressions and strict orthodox teaching. About this time Rousseau had exerted considerable influence in England, and his conception of the importance of the natural man free from conventions and restraining influences, were finding expression in a life which was particularily adapted to it, that life was Wordsworth's.

Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements. (3)

(1) Prelude Bk X L 536-551
(2) " Bk IV L 27-31
(3) " Bk V L 507-510

II CAMBRIDGE

The sojurn of Wordsworth at Cambridge (1787-1791), beginning as it did when he was seventeen, was important, almost as much because of the way in which it did not affect him, as it was for the actual influence it exerted on his mind. He was not gripped by anything the university had to present, and in this period as before, Nature continued to be his most trusted teacher, though the social life, and activity had some influence towards his development.

"The young student entered Cambridge during one of the least brilliant epochs in the history of the old University. It was then in the very last stage of intellectual langour. During the years immediately preceding the violent excitement of the French Revolution its atmosphere was heavy and drowsy, as if at the approach of a tempest..... To tell the truth learning was not in high repute at Cambridge, which was more especially the stronghold of Anglicanism and the nursery of the clergy." (1)

The orthodox teachings of the church at this time were devoid of inspiration, for one who had known the freedom and grandure of Nature, and under the free and happy influences at Hawkshead had found it the best teacher of divinity. The cold, formal, deistic

(1) "Early Life of Wordsworth" E. Legois p 71-2

influences of the university had little effect on the poets mind so that he still sat at the feet of his old teacher.

> Unknown, unthought of yet I was most rich-
> I had a world about me - 'twas my own;
> I made it, for it only lived to me,
> And to the God who sees into the heart. (1)

The impressions of the value which the poet found in the period spent at Cambridge are well expressed in the following lines.

> Could I behold.....
> With undelighted heart,
> So many happy youths, so wide and fair
> A congregation in its budding time
> Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once
> So many divers samples from the growth
> Of life's sweet season-could have seen unmoved
> That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
> Decking the matron temples of a place
> So famous through the world?
> .....
> if a throng was near
> That way I leaned by nature; for my heart
> Was social, and loved idleness and joy. (2)

The period had a value in that he developed under the social life of the place a larger place in his life for human fellowship. But the futility and the hollowness of ceremony, the disregard for new and vital truth aroused the soul of the poet and is expressed here.

> Youth should be awed, religiously, possessed
> With a conviction of the power that waits
> On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized
> For its own sake.....

(1) Prelude Bk III L 143-146
(2) " Bk III L 216-235

A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
A seemly plainess, name it what you will,
Republican or pious.
If these thoughts
Are a gratuitous emblazonry
That mocks the recreant age we live in, then
Be Folly and False-seeming free to effect
Whatever formal gait of discipline
Shall raise them highest in their own esteem-
Let them parade among the schooles at will,
But spare the house of God.
.....
Be wise,
Ye Presidents and deans, and till the spirit
Of ancient times rivive, and youth be trained
At home in pious service, to your bells
Give reasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
And your officious doings bring disgrace
On the plain steeples of our English Church. (1)

This passage sheds a light on Wordsworth's love of reality, and reverence for true piety; it also shows how he resented the attempts at compulsory religious practices in which little reality existed; consequently it shows how impossible it was for him to find any great stimulus in the life of Cambridge, as far as his theology and his religious convictions were concerned. He is still thrown back on his true teacher Nature.

III FRENCH REVOLUTION

Further influences in the life of the poet which could hardly be over estimated were the French, and the French Revolution. It could scarcely have been otherwise with anyone living in his day and with his sensitiveness of soul. He went to France in 1791 at the age of

(1) Prelude Bk III L 390-419

twenty-one, and became entheused over the Revolution.

> Meantime, day by day, the roads
> Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
> And all the promptness of her spirits, linked
> In gallant soldiership.....
>
> Even by these passing spectacles my heart
> Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
> Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
> Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
> Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
> Mean miserable, wilfully depraved,
> Hater perverse of equity and truth. (1)

In his boyhood Wordsworth had been absorbed with nature now in his young manhood he was absorbed in his thoughts of Man. He became acquainted with a young army officer by the name of Beaupuy, who exerted a great influence over him.

> By birth he ranked
> With the most noble, but unto the poor
> Among mankind he was in service bound,
> As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
> To a religious order. Man he loved
> As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
> And all the homely in their homely works,
> Transferred a courtesy which had no air
> Of condescension. (2)

Beaupuy who was considerably older than Wordsworth, was at this time his teacher, as well as his hero. He was on fire with the religion of Humanity, which had been inspired by Rousseau's doctrines.

(1) Prelude Bk IX L 262-287
(2) " Bk IX L 303-311

Something of the idealism shared by the soldier-philosopher, and the poet, is seen in the lines,

> To aspirations then of our own minds
> Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
> A living confirmation of the whole
> Before us, in a people from the deepth
> Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
> Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
> Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
> Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
> And continence of mind, and sense of right,
> Uppermost in the midst of strife. (1)

> Then doubt it not, and truth is more than truth,-
> A hope it is, and a desire; a creed
> Of zeal, by an authority Divine
> Sanction of danger, difficulty, or death. (2)

> In this frame of mind,
> Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
> So seemed it,- now I thankfully acknowledge,
> Forced by the gracious Providence of Heaven-
> To England I returned. (3)

He returned to his native land with these revolutionary ideals, filling his mind and soul, to take a keen interest in the political affairs of his country and to give his allegience to the Republican party. During the war between England and France his feelings find expression in the lines.

> It was a grief-
> Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that-
> A conflict of sensations without name,

(1) Prelude Bk IX L 381-390
(2) " Bk IX L 404-407
(3) " Bk X L 221-225

Of which He only, who may love the sight
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
When in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our countries victories;
And 'mid the simple worshipers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come. (1)

When the glorious hopes and high expectations of the Revolution had been replaced by the reign of Terror, Wordsworth sank into a mood of utter despair.

Then suddenly the scene
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
In long orations, which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals, - with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
In the last place of refuge - my own soul. (2)

In this hour of despondency, the poet went to nature for comfort, but Nature had become a term with deeper meaning and larger content. Nature now to a dgree unrealized by him before included, Man.

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea,
Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
So that disasterous period did not want
Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
To which the silver wands of saints in heaven
May point with rapturous joy. (3)

(1) Prelude X L 288-299
(2) " " " 409-415
(3) " " " 480-485

About the time Wordsworth had experienced the disillusionment of the Revolution he came under the influence of William Goodwin, a pupil of Rousseau, but one who had gone to extremes. Goodwin rejected the Deism of Roussean and was practically an atheist. His extreme ideas of personal liberty amounted to moral anarchy. He made reason the final authority in his philosophy. His influence on Wordsworth is seen in this passage.

> But speaking more in charity the dream
> Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
> With that which makes our Reason's naked self
> The object of its fervor. What delight!
> How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
> To look through all the frailties of the world,
> And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
> Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
> Build social upon personal liberty,
> Which to the blind restraints of general laws
> Superior, magisterially adopts
> One guide, the light of circumstance, flashed
> Upon the independent intellect. (1)

Wordsworth does not surrender to the pessimism in which he found himself at the time of his disappointment.

> Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
> With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
> From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
> In reconcilement with an utter waste
> Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,
> (To well I loved, in that my spring of life,
> Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward).

(1) Prelude XI L 232-244

But turned to abstract science, and there sought
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned. (1)

IV FRIENDSHIP OF COLERIDGE

A consideration of the various influences which played upon the life of Wordsworth could not overlook his long, and deep, friendship with Coleridge (1772-1834).

The friendship of these two great figures of Romantic poetry began in the year 1795, when they met for the first time. That friendship was based on Mutual understanding, and mutual admiration, though there was a marked difference between them in the matter of temperment. Wordsworth was slow, methodical and not easily turned from his views. Coleridge was quick, impulsive and impressionable. Coleridge had been affected by the Revolution in much the same way as Wordsworth, and he had also come under the spell of Godwin for a time. Coleridge gave much more formal allegiance to orthodox religion than Wordsworth, whom he referred to at one time as a 'semi-atheist'. Coleridge had been greatly influenced by the doctrines of Spinoza whose views he discussed with Wordsworth from time to time. Coleridge had received much from the Neo-Platonists of the Alexandrian school, and possessed a vivid faith in the power of intuition, ecstasy, and divine love. At the time of

(1) Prelude XI L 321-329.

their meeting it was a most fortunate experience for Wordsworth, who needed the stimulus of the encouragement which Coleridge lavished upon him. While Wordsworth did not accept Coleridge's views readily, he was very considerably influenced in the matter of his theology and religion. On their first meeting Wordsworth read "The Ruined Cottage", Coleridge his "Religious Musings". We noted that Wordsworth, following Godwin, had been inclined to place Reason on the throne, Coleridge would dethrone reason in favour of Love, through which alone we preceive God. The orthodox nature of Coleridge's faith is seen in the passage,

> Believe thou, O my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth,
> And vice and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> Shapes of a dream! The veiling clouds retire,
> And lo! the throne of the redeeming God
> Forth flashing unimaginable day
> Wraps in one blaze earth, heaven, and the deepest hell. (1)

While Coleridge influenced Wordsworth to some extent towards a more orthodox religious faith, Wordsworth influenced Coleridge toward a greater appreciation of nature.

> Of rivers, fields,
> And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee,
> Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
> Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
> Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
> Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
> Moving in heaven, or, of that pleasure tired,

(1) Coleridge "Religious Musings" L 422-428

> To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
> See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream
> Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
> Of a long exile. (1)

Thus while the friendship enriched the lives of both poets, the influence of Coleridge upon Wordsworth in restoring him to something of the joy and wonder in life, which was his portion in childhood, but lost to some degree in his experience of the revolution, was a great service to mankind, for it gave to the poet's thought a new and deeper theological quality.

In summarizing the influences which were out standing in the life of Wordsworth, especially those which would have a bearing upon his idea of God and His relation to the world, the first and possibly the most important was that of Nature, in his childhood. His younger days were free and unhampered by any strict school, rather was Hawkshead a place conducive to the development of his sensativeness to Nature. His experience at Cambridge did not leave any theological impression with him and only discouraged him from the orthodox views of the times. The Revolution enlarged his view of Nature to include Man, though the disappointments of the results of this social upheaval unsettled him greatly. His friendship with Coleridge restored his spirit and gave him a more orthodox view of theology,

though it did not weaken the independence of his thinking.

WORDSWORTH'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

In approaching the subject of Wordsworth's conception of God, it is to be noted, that he did not make formal declarations of his creed. He was a poet, not a theologian, possibly not even interested in theology, as such. He was merely describing his impressions of Nature and experience, as they had registered upon his mind, though the medium of poetry. That his experiences brought to him a consciousness of God, there can be no doubt. He used the word God freely throughout his works, as well as various other terms which have a similar significence. It has been noted that the tendency of the century previous to the time in which he wrote the most of his important poems, was toward a conception of God as working in and consequently to be found, in the universe, in nature and her laws. The romantic movement had intensified this tendency because of its preoccupation with the beauty of nature and the dignity of man. The tendency would be that, if Wordsworth was to find God, he would find him in the universe, as he understood it and found himself in relation to it. The Deism of the orthodox theologians could have little influence on a Romantic poet. The extreme transendence of the whole orthodox section of the church had little or no place in the thought of Wordsworth.

The natural consequence of Wordsworth's lack of interest in the Deism of his day would be, that he would tend to find a satisfying conception in the direction of Pantheism. A further probability would be that even though he did not go to the extreme limits of the pantheistic view of God, he would go far enough in that direction to arouse the criticism of those who were interested in orthodox Christianity. It is quite conceivable that even though his conception of God was that of Immanence, rather than Pantheism, he might have received the same criticism. The criticism might have been based on misunderstanding rather than on actual Pantheism. This idea is hinted at in Professor De Selincourt's introduction to "Wordsworth's Prelude". "Moreover, he felt a deep sense of responsibility as a teacher, and he had good reason to know that he was misunderstood. Both Lines composed.....above Tintern Abbey and the Ode; 'Intimations of Immortality', had proved a stumblingblock to many. He was accused, even by the readers of "The Excursion", of not distinguishing 'Nature as the work of God and God himself'." (1)

A further caution in our approach to a true understanding of Wordsworth's conception of God would be related to the point of his emphesis. Naturally by

(1) "Wordsworth's Prelude" E. De Selincourt P LIX

virtue of his romantic spirit, and his consequent interest in nature and in man, as the field in which he sought and discovered the reality of God, his emphesis would tend to be on the idea of Immanence, and the transendent phase of his theology would not be so liable to find expression. It might rather be taken for granted than expressed in actual words or phrases.

To those who would charge Wordsworth with Pantheism, it could be pointed out, that due to the fine distinction between the idea of Pantheism and that of Immanence, the further vagueness of poetic expression and his natural point of emphesis as a Romantic poet, the possibility of misunderstanding his theological views is quite strong.

To support the charge of Pantheism it would be necessary to show that in the view of Wordsworth expressed in his poems there was no place for belief in the reality of God, apart from the universe as he saw it in Nature, and in Man.

To refute the charge of Pantheism it would be necessary to show from his works, that he did have a conception of God in which there was an element of transendence. That God was not limited to these worldly spheres but existed to some degree above and apart from them.

II HIS PANTHEISM

Those who charge Wordsworth with Pantheism acknowledge that it is more marked in his earlier writings, and becomes less apparent in his later work. It has been pointed out that in his earlier life he was more under the sway of nature. Nature was his first teacher and the entheusiasm in which his first lessons were learned, even though they were expressed in poems, somewhat later would tend to place the emphesis on the pantheisistic side.

> That which we see of forms and images
> Which float along our minds, and what we feel
> Of active or recognizable thought,
> Prospectiveness, or intellect, or will,
> Not only is not worthy to be deemed
> Our being, to be prized as what we are
> But is the very littleness of life.
> Such consciousness I deem but accidents,
> Relapses from the one interior life
> That lives in all things, sacred from the touch
> Of that false secondary power by which
> In weakness we create distinctions, then
> Believe that all our puhy boundaries are things
> Which we perceive and not which we have made;
> In which all beings live with God, themselves
> Are God, existing in the mighty whole,
> As indistinguishable as the cloudless East
> At noon is from the cloudless west when all
> The hemisphere is one cerulean blue. (1)

Here Wordsworth is drawing a contrast between the power of reason or intellect, and a state of passiveness in which Nature through our senses imparts to us a consciousness of God. This sensationalism is similar

(1) Fragment referred to by Prof. De Selincourt. "Prelude" page 512

to that developed by Locke, Berkeley and Hume.

> In which all ebings live with God, themselves
> Are God, ...
> indistinguishable etc.

Here we have what is perhaps the most outstanding statement of Wordsworth, which provided a basis for charging him with pantheistic doctrine. It would seem that in this passage he has come very near saying 'all is God". It seems more proper to think of this section of the passage as an overwhelming mystical experience induced by Nature, and expressed rather extravagantly. 'Themselves are God', could be said to be a poetic way of enhancing the phrase 'In which all beings live with God'. The phrase,'line nine', of the passage quoted would almost save it from sheer pantheism, 'the one interior life that lives in all things', Reference is made here to something which transends at least the processes of thought and reason. While it may not be a real expression of a transendent idea, the door is not completely closed to the idea of transendence.

Another passage which was used to substantiate the charge of Pantheism is quoted here.

> My mind hath look'd
> Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
> As her prime Teacher, intercourse with man
> Establish'd by the sovereign Intellect
> Who through that bodily immage hath diffus's
> A soul divine which we participate,
> A deathless spirit. (1)

(1) Prelude Book V L 11-17 1805-6 Edition

The above passage, quoted here as it was first written, was one of the passages which Wordsworth considered it necessary to change because of its pantheistic flavour. The passage might be described as one which tends toward the conception of Immanence. 'The speaking face of earth and heaven', is referred to as the Teacher. This would seem to imply that Nature was an instrument through which something which transended it was mediated to the soul of the poet. Further 'sovereign Intellect' diffusing a soul divine through bodily immage, etc. at least does not deny the reality of a transendent element in the supreme reality, in fact it almost implies such an element.

> Add unto this subservience from the first
> To God and Nature's single sovereignty,
> Familiar presences of awful power
> And fellowship with venerable books
> To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
> And mountain liberty. (1)

This is another of the passages Wordsworth felt, aught to be changed toward a more orthodox view. 'To God and Nature's single sovereignty', does not rule out the idea of transendence. It could almost be read as a blending of Immanence and transendence in a single sovereignty. The idea of subservience to this supreme sovereignty does not imply pantheism.

(1) Prelude Bk IX L 233-238 (1805-6) Edition.

A poem into which might be read considerable of pantheistic tendency is pointed out by Professor De Selincourt as the embodiment of Wordsworth's religious creed, and is one of his best know works, "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey". To quote from an introductory note to the poem written by Wordsworth himself "no poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this". As he revisits an old haunt he recounts how the images in his mind of this view has affected him, as a source of strength, of pleasure, and of understanding of the universe.

Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:- that serence and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy
We see into the life of things. (1)

To fathom the depths of such expression must ever be an unfinished task for the ordinary person. It is impossible to escape the feeling that here is the expression of a deeply religious spirit whose experience of the Supreme Reality is first hand. Through Nature

(1)"Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"

the poet, fully conscious of the intellectual problems life presents has a spiritual experience which assures him of a harmony in things strong enough to bring him joy. In this part of the poem the spiritual takes precedence over the physical. It hardly suggests pantheism. The affections gently lead us on. Love plays a part in our approach to understanding the Supreme Reality. The word ecstasy might describe the experience, but it is the ecstasy of spiritual discovery.

The poet continues to recount the pleasures of the prospect before him and the change which has taken place within himself since his boyhood when,

> like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Where ever nature led: More like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.

Here Wordsworth notes a change in himself a widening of his horizon, from the sphere of his first lessons at the feet of his beloved teacher Nature, to one which includes man, with his evil and his sadness.

> For I have learned
> To look on Nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing of tentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of settling suns
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, -both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart and soul
Of all my moral being.

To read this passage as the utterance of a pantheist would not be altogether unreasonable. From the line beginning, 'Whose dwelling is the light of setting sons', to 'rolls through all things', would suggest such interpretation. Yet it does not seem possible to cover the full meaning of this whole section quoted above, by the term pantheism.

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with a joy
.....
something far more deeply interfused.

The term, 'a presence', would seem to indicate an element of transendence. The presence is an intrusion, it disturbs with a joy of elevated thoughts. It is like inspiration breaking in from a spiritual world. Moreover it creates in the mind of the poet a 'sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused'.

It suggests the expression contained in the passage referred to above, 'in one interior life'. It seems that the poet is seeking to express a reality which transends his power to perceive.

'Well pleased to recognize in Nature the language of the sense', Wordsworth places great emphesis on this sensationalism, yet it is but an instrument in bringing to his soul something which lies beyond the senses. Nature is an 'anchor', 'the nurse', 'the guide', 'the guardian', all these terms represent functions ministering to his soul, to his moral being.

It is true that he speaks of himself as a worshiper of nature. Later in Tintern Abbey he says

> "and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came
> Unwearied in that service."

While Wordsworth in his earlier life was a worshipper of Nature, it was a worship in which nature reflected some reality beyond itself. It induced in the soul of the poet, strength and pleasure, and understanding of the universe, it inspired him with the consciousness of a 'presence', it was an inspiration to him, because it was alive with manifestations of God. There is some ground for calling him a pantheist, yet there seems to be an element, even in his poems, which gave rise to

this description of him, which transend the strict limits of pantheism.

II MODIFICATIONS

The Prelude or 'Growth of a Poet's mind' has special significance for anyone seeking to understand the theology of Wordsworth. It is the introduction to a larger work he had planned to call the "Recluse", of which the "Excursion", was the first instalment. The Prelude deals with the development of the poet's thought, and was published after his death, though it was written by 1805-6, and revised by himself considerably throughout his life. The process of revision is noted by considering a number of Manuscripts of the work which are in existence some quite complete and in good condition, though others are fragmentary and mutilated. In Professor De Selincourt's edition of the Prelude, he gives two readings of the poem; on one side of the page the poem as it was at the time it was completed in 1805-6, on the other page, the edition which was published after Wordsworth's death in 1850. Many changes are noted dealing with various phases of the poets work. In one section of the Introduction, Professor De Selincourt notes the changes between the 1805-6 edition and the 1850 edition which have a bearing on Wordsworth's religious views. These will be noted here

as they are related to the matter of the poets tendency towards pantheism.

(1) In Prelude Bk 1 line 341 1805-6 edition, Wordsworth writes

> The mind of man is framed even like the breath
> And harmony of music:

In the parallel passage of the 1850 edition this is changed to.

> Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
> Like harmony in music;

This passage indicates that Wordsworth was anxious to remove any marks of unorthodox teaching from his work, and in this case he does erase a hint at pantheism, by contrasting 'dust as we are' with the 'immortal spirit'.

(2) In Bk 5 line 15,16 1805-6

> Who through that bodily image hath difussed
> A soul divine which we participate,
> A deathless spirit.

becomes in 1850

> Who through the bodily image hath diffused
> As might appear to eye of fleeting time,
> A deathless spirit.

(3) In Bk 9 line 237

> To God and nature's single sovereignty

becomes in 1850

> Presences of God's mysterious power
> Made manifest in natures sovereignty.

(4) In Bk 2 line 429-30

> For in all things now
> I saw one life, and felt that it was joy

becomes in 1850

Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated, with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.

(5) Book 11 line 234-8 1805-6

I worshipped then among the depths of things
As my soul bade me-.....
I felt and nothing else

becomes in 1850

Worshipping then among the depths of things
As piety ordained.....
I felt, observed, and pondered.

(6) Book 13 line 183-4

The feeling of life endless, the great thought
By which we live, Infinity and God

becomes in 1850

Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity and God.

In the above passages only 1,2,3,4, are of much importance in relation to Wordsworth's pantheism. The other passages show a general tendency with the passing of time towards a definite desire to adhere to orthodox Christianity. While this dulls the vigor and the realism of the poets earlier work, it does not follow that he was not being true to his convictions. In the passages quoted, no surrender has been made of anything which was fundamental in his mind before. It was merely overlaid with a touch of orthodoxy which seems out of

place. Professor De Selincourt deplores the changes which Wordsworth affected in such lines as have been quoted but goes on to say. "The revised Prelude represents another, less independent creed. The position into which he had now withdrawn was not for him a false position. He was sincere, now as ever. But if he was conscious of a change, as it is abundantly clear that he was, he would surely have done better to leave as it stood what he had first written for Coleridge, and, instead of disguising his former faith, to have expounded in a book of the Recluse, or elsewhere the reasons that led him to move from it, and the manner in which it could be reconciled with the tenets of an historic church." (1)

The changes which Wordsworth made in the various revisions of the Prelude show that he was not a thorough-going panteist. The passages which deal with this phase of this thought show quite clearly that there was a place in his view for an element of transendence in the supreme being.

So far, from the consideration of those poems which were marked by the expression of a fresh invigorating experience of the Divine even with the flavour of pantheism it is seen that the pantheistic element was not completely demonstrable. Now in the light of

(1) "Wordsworth's Prelude" E. De Selincourt page L XII

'revisions' it is much less tenable. The establishing of Wordsworth's Theism would depend now on finding throughout his works a sufficient number of statements in which there was clearly an element of the idea of transedence in his conception of God. As has been noted clear-cut statements from a poets mind are not common, however throughout his poems, and especially in the Prelude a considerable number seem to indicate this transendent element in his theology.

III HIS THEISM

As the 'Prelude' is the account by Wordsworth himself of the development of his thought, it supplies important evidence of his conception of God. The passages which have a direct bearing on this subject will be noted, and the element of transendence indicated. Quotations will be taken from the 1850 edition of the Prelude as given in Professor De Selincourt's "Wordsworth's Prelude". The poem covers the story of the poets life from his childhood at Cockermouth and Hawkshead, through his Cambridge experience and residence in London, his sojurn in France and his experience of the Revolution out of which there arises a crisis in his experience. This is followed by a period of restoration under the influence of his friends, and his sister at Alfoxden. The events of

these years register in his thought and there is a continuous development in his philosophy and theology throughout.

Book I bears the title 'Childhood and School-Time', when-as he indicates in Tintern Abbey- "nature then..... .....to me was all in all."

Book I L 544-558.

> Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
> How Nature by extrinsic passion first
> Peopled the mind with form sublime or fair,
> And made me love them, may I here omit
> How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
> Of Subtler origin; How I have felt,
> Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
> Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
> Which seem in their simplicity, to own
> An intellectual charm; that calm delight
> Which, if I err not, surely must belong
> To those first-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things,
> And, in our dawn of being, constitute
> The bond of union between life and joy.

The point in this passage would seem to be that there was some power of more subtle origin than Nature with which the child had contact which made for joy. The passage suggests something of the idea Wordsworth expresses in "Ode to Immortality"

> Not in entire forgefulness
> And not in utter nakedness
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home. (1)

(1) "Ode to Immortality" Stanza V.

This raises the question of Wordsworth's idea of pre-existence, in which there seems to be an element of transendence. Certainly God exists in a sense apart from the world as we know it in our complete sophistication here.

Book I L 340-344

> Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
> Like harmony in music; there is a dark
> Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, makes them cling together
> In one society.

This passage has already been quoted and shows clearly the distinction between, 'dust as we are', and 'the immortal spirit'. In the 'inscrutable workmanship', that reconciles discordant elements there is a suggestion of transendence.

Book I L 401-414

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> An everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul:
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things-
> With life and nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandure in the beatings of the heart.

In this passage the opening words 'Wisdom and Spirit' suggest a transendent idea of ultimate reality.

It is this Spirit or soul working through images, childhood, high objects feeling, and thought, which induce in the soul a sense of its grandure. The implication is that This Reality transends these experiences which provide a medium through which It moves us.

Book II School-time (continued) L 215

No officious slave
Art thou of that false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we pereeive, and not that we have made.

With the false secondary power (science) the poet contrasts the understanding possessed by the babe.

L 235

blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye
For him in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.

Thus feeling plays such an important part in our understanding of the Universe. Feeling is "like an agent of the one Great Mind, Great creator and receiver both", L 257-8. "The one great Mind" and agent of which is feeling, shows an element of transendense.

Book II L 395-409

I at this time (age 17)
Saw blessings spread round me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Beneath the wave, yea in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters.

It would seem that this passage does contain a flavour of pantheistic teaching. Yet when this 'sentiment of Being' is beyond the reach of thought and knowledge and is discoverable only in feeling or more particularily in feeling, the mysticism which is thus assumed, denotes, a transendent conception of that Being.

Book II L 427-32

If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours (nature)

There seems to be in this passage a certain asceticism suggested. The poet has withdrawn from life's littleness by his communion with God and Nature. 'God and nature', incline to a transendent view.

Book III Residence at Cambridge

Wordsworth was not inspired by the type of experience he had at Cambridge and still finds Nature his school, and source of strenght.

Book III L 143-147

> Unknow, unthought of, yet I was most rich-
> I had a world about me- 'twas my own;
> I made it, for it only lived to me,
> And to the God who sees into the heart.

The last line of this passage implies belief in a God whose being transends the world and who from without looks into the heart of men.

Book III L 170-191

> And here O Friend! have I retraced my life
> Up to an eminence, and told a tale
> Of matters which not falsly may be called
> The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,
> Creation and divinity itself.
> I have been speaking, for my theme has been
> What passed within me. Not of outward things
> Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,
> Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
> Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
> O heavens! how awful is the might of souls,
> And what they do within themselves while yet
> The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
> Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
> This is in truth herioc argument,
> This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
> With hand however weak, but in the main
> It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
> Points have we all of us within our souls
> Where all stand singly; this I feel, and make
> Breathings for incommunicable powers;
> But is not each a memory to himself
> And, therefore now that we must quit this theme,
> I am not heartless, for there's not a man
> That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
> And feels not what an empire we inherit
> As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

In the above passage The divine is set over against the world in the words 'the yoke of earth', and in 'the world nothing but a wild field in which they were sown'. The prowess which the poet sought to touch 'with hand however weak', seems to be somewhat transendent. The same idea is contained in 'breathings for incommunicable powers'.

Book IV Summer Vacation

L 150

> Gently did my soul
> Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
> Naked, as in the presence of her God.

In an hour of solitude Wordsworth seeks the presence of God, and in this instance the experience which is the result of his quest is not produced by Nature.

L 153

> While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
> A heart that had not been disconsolate:
> Strenght came where weakness was not known to be,
> At least not felt; and restoration came
> Like an intruder knocking at the door
> Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
> The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
> Of that external scene which round me lay,
> Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
> Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
> And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
> Conversed with promises, had glimmering views.
> How life pervades the undecaying mind
> How the immortal soul with God-like power
> Informs creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
> That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
> Man, if he do but live within the light
> Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
> His being armed with strength that cannot fail.

In this experience in which there is a very real Mysticism the idea of God conveyed by the passage certainly contains an element of transendence.

Book IV L 333

In the following passage, the poet has been for a walk, in which he is struck by the beauty of his surroundings, and experiences a consecration.

> Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

In this experience of dedication Wordsworth in using the words 'I made no vows, but vows were made for me', and 'bond unknown to me was given', shows that the experience of dedication had to do with some power beyond the reach of his mind or heart.

Book IV L 348

> When folly from the frown of fleeting Time
> Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself
> Conformity as just as that of old
> To the end and written spirit of God's works,
> Whether held forth in Nature or in Man
> Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

The phrasing in the above passage 'God's works... ....in Nature or in Man', is not the phraseology of pantheism, but a suggestion of a somewhat transendent Being, finding expression in the sphere of the world.

Book V (BOOKS)

L 359

Wordsworth is pouring scorn on the presumption of the too confident knowledge of the world, with its various prophesies.

> When will their presumption learn
> That in the unreasoning progress of the world
> A wiser spirit is at work for us,
> A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
> Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
> Even in what seem our most fruitful hours?

It would be difficult to find a passage in poetry which would express more clearly, the idea of a transendent God, presiding over the affairs of men.

Book VI CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

L 129-141

Wordsworth has been commenting on the science of Geometry to which he is attracted for a time.

> More frequently from the same source I drew
> A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
> Of permanent and iniversal sway,
> And paramount belief; there, recognized
> A type, for finite natures, of the one
> Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
> Which -to the boundaries of space and time,
> Of melancholy space and doleful time,
> Superior, and incapable of change,
> Nor touched by welterings of passion is,
> And hath the name of, God. Transendent peace
> And silence did await upon these thoughts
> That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

The distinction between 'finite natures' and the one 'Supreme Existence', 'superior' to 'boundaries of space and time', is more than a suggestion of the idea

of the transendent nature of the Supreme Being.

Book VI L 682-687

Wordsworth has been discribing Lake Locarno and the surroundings.

sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously, in silent blessedness;
Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

'When God, the giver of all joy' is the language of transendence rather than pantheism.

Book VIII RETROSPECT

L 259

"genius, under Nature, under God presiding",

This phrase has a transendent meaning.

Book VIII L 476-494

Enough of humble arguments; recall,
My Song! those high emotions which thy voice
Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth
Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,
When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,
And all the several frames of things, like stars,
Through every magnitude distinguishable,
Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
Each in the others blaze, a galaxy
Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As of all visible natures, crown, though born
Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture,
Through the divine effect of power and love;
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

This passage has a special importance in that it

marks that enlargment of Wordsworth's views, from a point at which he had hitherto found Nature his great object of affection, to one in which Man became the center and the crown of Nature. It also shows clearly the transendent element in the poets theology. Man though born of dust and kindred to the worm; through the 'divine effect of power and love' is above all other creatures 'instinct with godhead' but acknowledges 'dependency sublime'.

Book IX RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

L 233-236

Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty.

Upon this basis Wordsworth builds his justification of the French Revolution. The transendent side of the passage is worthy of note. 'Nature's sovereignty' is but a manifestation of 'God's mysterious power'.

Book IX L 354-363

We added dearest themes-
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

Here again the poet is setting forth the spiritual basis of the revolution as it is rooted in 'The gift which God has placed within his (man's) power'. An idea containing the transendent view of God.

Book X RESIDENCE IN FRANCE (continued)

L 420

But, O Power Supreme!
Without Whose call the world would cease to breathe,
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
The veins that branch through every frame of life
Making man what he is creature divine.

In this passage the idea of transendence and Immanence blend in a natural Theism.

Book XI FRANCE (concluded)

L 290-300

These lines show a stage of perplexity and disillusionment over the French Revolution.

Out of a heart that had been turned aside
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded more and more
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours; now believing,
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
With impulse motive, right and wrong,
The ground of obligation, what the rule and whence
The sanction

.....

306-313

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the souls last and lowest ebb; I dropped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most: The lordly attributes
Of will and choice, I bitterly exclaimed,
'What are they but a mockery of a Being
Who hath in no concerns of his a test
Of good and evil;'

This passage represents a low ebb in the spiritual discernment of Wordsworth. For a time he has turned aside from Nature, in favour of Reason and was absorbed in the sphere of Man, and his social betterment, but he found that sphere a morass of disappointment and dispair. 'Will and choice', which have appeared to have a divine significence, are now a mockery of a 'Being' who seems to have given man no ultimate tests to guide him. It almost reflects the idea that God has become for him as remote as the Deistic view would teach. However, Wordsworth does not yield long to the spirit of pessemism. There is strength in the passage, Line 391-95.

> But indignation works where hope is not,
> And thou O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
> One great society alone on earth:
> The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Here from the idea, of God finding his greatest and most complete expression in Nature or in man as a reasoning progressing spirit, we find a somewhat new emphasis on the ethical 'noble living' and the 'noble dead'.

Book XII

IMAGINATION AND TASTE HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

L 40-44

> Through these distracted times; in Nature still
> Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
> Which when the spirit of evil reached its height
> Maintained for me a secret happiness.

Nature acts as a restorative influence in bringing back poise to the poet's soul.

L 96-102

> What then remained in such eclipse? what light
> To guide or cheer? The laws of things which lie
> beyond the reach of human will or power:
> The life of nature by the God of love
> Inspired, celestial presence ever pure;
> These left, the soul of youth must needs be rich,
> Whatever else be lost.

It would appear from this passage that the trying experiences through which the poet has been passing, have left him on a higher level of spiritual consciousness. The lines quoted show that God transends by his love, and that the possession of the consciousness of this fact is of greater value than all that may have been lost or eclipsed.

Book XII L 171

The poet having discribed a maid of singular charm and grace adds this.

> God delights,
> In such a being; for her common thoughts
> Are piety, her life is gratitude.

'God delights' is only possible when considered to some degree at least transendent. The quality of gratitude also denotes a relationship which belongs to a theistic conception of the diety.

Book XII L 311-316

> And when I called to mind
> That day so lately past, when from the crag

I looked in such anxiety of hope;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God, who thus corrected my desires.

The reference is to an experience of grief over the death of Wordsworth's brother. The language in which expression is given to the poets surrender to the higher will is not capable of interpretation except in the light of God's transendence.

Book XIII

IMAGINATION AND TASTE HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED
(continued)

L 20-28

I had been tought to reverence a Power
That is the visable quality and shape
And image of right reason: that matures
Her processes by steadfast lawa; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect; but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
.....

(continuation) L 39-47

above all
Were re-established now those watchful thoughts
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon--power and energy detached
FRom moral purpose--early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.

In this passage Wordsworth shows his reverence for a Power which works through-out the universe according to steadfast and unchanging laws. This was the result of his early training under his beloved

teacher Nature. He resents however the idea of these laws operating in power and energy without reference to moral purpose. When we think of moral purpose the pantheistic view is not adequate to contain the conception, and we are on the threshold of Theism which contains the necessary element of transendence. The idea of Immanence is unmistakably contained in the conception of a Power which works through laws.

Book XIII L 275

In the context of this passage Wordsworth is praising humble men, of high ideals of service, though not prominent in the eyes of the world.

> This I speak
> In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
> For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
> When we are unregarded by the world.

In these lines the poet pays tribute to the service which is inspired by God. There is a distinction here between God on the one hand who loves us, and the world by which we are unregarded. The implication is that God is above the earthly sphere.

Book XIII L 366-375

> Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself
> Witness and judge; and I remember well
> That in life's every-day appearances
> I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
> Of a new world--a world, too, that was fit
> To be transmitted, and to other eyes
> Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
> Whence spiritual dignity originates,
> Which do both give it being and maintain

A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within;

It would seem impossible to intepret this passage as pantheistic. It would appear more like well balanced theism.

Book XIV CONCLUSION
L 112

Such minds are truly from the Deity
For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs--the consciousness
Of whom they are habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation of the Soul.
.....
L 124-129

Hence amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts--if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied--that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

The reference to 'such minds' is to three chance wanderers in calm thought L 65, who seem to possess special powers of spiritual insight. The communion or mystic experience they enjoy is centered in an transendent God, they are raised from 'earth to heaven, from human to divine'. From this pure source peace must come to man or 'will by man be sought in vain'.

Book XIV L 181-

Wordsworth has been discussing love in its various forms when he makes this statement raising love to a

high level.

> Unless this love by a still higher love,
> Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
> Love that adores, but on the knee of prayer,
> By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
> Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
> Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
> Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's throne.

That love which is one of the heights of human experience, should require to be sanctioned by the God of Heaven shows a strong trend in the direction of transendence.

L 188-205

> This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
> Without Imagination, which, in truth,
> Is but another name for absolute power
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And Reason in her most exalted mood.
> This faculty hath been the feeding source
> From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
> Its natal murmur; followed it to light
> An open day; accompanied its course
> Among the ways of Nature, for a time
> Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed;
> Then given it greeting as it rose once more
> In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
> The works of man and face of human life;
> And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
> Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
> Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

This passage is an admirable summary of the development of Wordsworth's view of ultimate reality. There is a large place given to Imagination which is 'reason in her most exalted mood'. Reference is made to the place nature filled in developing his thought.

The eclipse occassioned by the Revolution and its disappointments are indicated, then a fresh faith in Human life, finally faith in life endless, Eternity and God. It would be difficult to call this creed by any name more fitting than Theism.

While any conclusion with reference to the theological conceptions of Wordsworth, which might be reached in an examination of the 'Prelude', would not be reversed by consideration of other poems, a few passages which strengthen the implications resulting from quotations already made may be added from some of the more important ones. The Excursion, written 1795-1814, while it was used as an evidence of Wordsworth's pantheistic views, contains passages in which there is a denial of this viewpoint.

> In succ access of mind in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love. (1)

The idea of the transendent nature of God is very clearly expressed in this passage.

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists -one only; an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, how e'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being

(1) Excursion Bk I page 420 (Everyman's Edition)

Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.
.....
by faith.
Faith absolute in God, including hope
and the defence that lies in boundless love
Of his perfections: with habitual dread
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured
Impatiently, ill-done or left undone,
To the dishonour of his holy name. (1)

Single and one the omnipresent God
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,
Or cloud of darkness, localized in heaven; (2)

I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smoothe-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with his native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
Devout above the meaning of your will.
-Yes you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.(3)

(1) Excursion Bk IV page 482-3 (Everyman's Edition)
(2) " Bk IV " 497 " "
(3) " Bk IV " 509 " "

Here the poet through the universe sees, feels and hears God yet has a sense that He is beyond all his senses and intuitions.

> While from the grassy mountain's open side
> We gazed in silence hushed, with eyes intent
> On the refulgent spectacle, difussed
> Through earth, sky, water, and all visable space,
> The priest in holy transport thus exclaimed:
> "Eternal Spirit! Universal God!"
> Power inaccessable to human thought,
> Save by degrees and steps which thou hast deigned
> To furnish; for this effluence of thyself,
> To the infirmity of mortal sense
> Vouchsafed; (1)

'Power inaccessable to human thought' stresses the transendent character of God.

A group of Wordsworth's poems which aught not to be passed over without notice in considering his theology, is the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets". While critics of Wordsworth do not give these a high place in his work, many of them are interesting as well as beautiful. As to their bearing on his theological views, they show that in his later years the poet gave himself quite whole-heartedly to orthodox views of the Christian faith. Few of these sonnets express clearly his theological views, they deal with subjects relating to the church and its functions and activities and the theology which has been noted in 'the Prelude' is implied in them. These poems have less passion than is contained in the story

(1) "The Excursion" Bk VII page 617 (Everyman's Edition)

of his own mental and spiritual struggles. In the Prelude his faith was the result of a persistant attack on his own doubts and misgivings until conviction came to him. In the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets", either he has come to a more peaceful orthodox view, or he is accepting the theological frame work of the Church of England with which he had always been more or less connected. A few passages will reveal his theological temper in this period. (1821-2)

The Point At Issue

> For what contend the wise? --for nothing less
> Than that the soul, freed from the bonds of Sense,
> And to her God restored by evidence
> Of things not seen, drawn forth from their recess,
> Root there, and not in forms, her holiness;
> For Faith which to the Patriarchs did dispense
> Sure guidance, ere a ceremonial fence
> Was needful round men thirsting to transgress;--
> For Faith, more perfect still, with which the Lord
> Of all, himself a Spirit, in the youth
> Of Christian aspiriation, deigned to fill
> The temples of their hearts who, with his word
> Informed, were resolute to do his will,
> And worship him in spirit and in truth.

There is in this passage a new emphasis on faith and freedom from the senses. This had already appeared in the later chapters of the Prelude. Here also we have more of the language of orthodox, and more of the ecclesiast. The theology implied is one in which transendence is rather the point of emphasis.

"Poems of William Wordsworth" W. Knight Vol. VII p. 58

CONJECTURES

If there be prophets on whose spirits rest
Past things revealed like future, they can tell
What Powers, presiding o'er the sacred well
Of Christian Faith, this savage Island blessed
With its fair bounty. Wandering through the west,
Did holy Paul a while in Britain dwell,
And call the Fountain forth by miracle,
And with dread signs the nascent stream invest?
Or He, whose bonds dropped off, whose prison doors
Flew open, by an Angel's voice unbarred?
Or some of humbler name, to these wild shores
Storm-driven; who, having seen the cup of woe
Pass from their Master, sojourned here to guard
The precious Current they had tought to flow. (1)

In the years in which these sonnets were written, Wordsworth had a greater interest in organized Christianity. In previous times religion was something fed by his own inner life as it reacted to experience. By the time of the writing of the sonnets, he seems to rely somewhat on an external authority for his views.

ENGLISH REFORMERS IN EXILE

Scattering, like birds escaped the folwer's net,
Some seek with timely flight a foreign strand;
Most happy, re-assembled in the land
By dauntless Luther freed, could they forget
Their Country's woes. But scarcely have they met,
Partners in faith, and brothers in distress,
Free to pour forth their common thankfulness,
Ere hope declines:- their union is beset
With speculative notions rashly sown,
Whence thickly-sprouting growth of poisonous weeds,
Their forms are broken staves; their passions seeds,
That master them. How enviable blest
Is he who can, by help of grace, enthrone
The peace of God within his single breast. (2)

The poet displays a knowledge of the problems which

(1) "Poems of William Wordsworth" W. Knight Vol.VII p 5
(2) " " " " " " VII p 64

acompany spiritual independence. He had learned of them in the school of his own experience and struggle. "How enviable.....is he who....by help of grace... can enthrone the peace of God within his own experience?" It would seem that he could refer to himself in this way.

CLERICAL INTEGRITY

Nor shall the eternal roll of praise reject
Those Unconforming; whom one rigourous day
Drives from their Curses a voluntary prey
To poverty and grief, and disrespect,
And some to want--as if by tempests wrecked
On a wild coast; how destitute!- did they
Feel not that Conscience never can betray,
That peace of mind is Virtue's sure effect.
Their alters they forego, their homes they quit
Fields which they love, and paths they daily trod,
And cast the future upon Providence;
As men the dictate of whose inward sense
Outweighs the world; whom self-deceiving wit
Lures not from what they deem the cause of God. (1)

Wordsworth has a wholesome respect for man's inner convictions even though they cause suffering and deprivation.

SACRAMENT

By chain yet stronger must the soul be tied:
One duty more, last stage of this ascent,
Brings to thy food, mysterious Sacrament!
The Offspring, haply at the parent's side;
But not till they, with all that do abide
In Heaven, have lifted up their hearts to laud
And magnify the glorious name of God,
Fountain of Grace, whose Son for sinners died
Ye, who have duly weighed the summons, pause

)1) "Poems of William Wordsworth" W. Knight p 78

No longer; ye, whom to the saving rite
The alter calls; come early under laws
That can secure for you a path of light
Through gloomiest shade; put on (nor dread the weight)
Armour divine, and conquer in your cause. (1)

Wordsworth seems to have found a place of importance in his thought for the ceremonial side of religious observance, and sees in the sacrament a valid source of 'light', as well as a strength through which one may be victorious in a cause.

FORMS OF PRAYER AT SEA

To kneeling worshippers no earthly floor
Gives holier invitation than the deck
Of a storm-shattered vessel saved from wreck
(When all that Man could do avail'd no more)
By him who raised the tempest and restrains:
Happy the crew who this have felt, and pour
Forth for his mercy, as the Church ordains,
Solemn thanksgiving. Nor will they implore
In vain who, for a rightful cause, give breath
To words the church prescribes aiding the lip
For the heart's sake, ere ship with hostile ship
Encounters, armed for work of pain and death.
Suppliants! the God to whom your cause ye trust
Will listen, and ye know that He is just. (2)

It would seem that in this sonnet Wordsworth goes farther in the direction of orthodox, ecclesiastical faith than is becoming to him. He goes beyond mere assent to a creed and exalts the institution to a place

(1) "Poems of William Wordsworth" W. Knight p 93

(2) " " " " " p 94

of important authority. His own soul is overshadowed by the importance of an external order.

In presenting the evidence in favour of the tendency of Wordsworth toward Theism rather than Pantheism some statement, of his own, bearing on the subject should be of value. Wehave noted that he was charged with Pantheistic doctrine and made certain changes in the Prelude in order that he might not be misunderstood. E. C. Batho presents a statement by Wordsworth himself which is a reply to a friend, Mrs. Clarkson, who has accused him of Spinozism.

"She talks of my being a worshipper of Nature. A passionate expression, uttered incautiously in the poem upon the Wye, has lead her to this mistake; she, reading in cold-heartedness, and substituting the letter for the spirit. Unless I am greatly mistaken, there is nothing of this kind in the Excursion. There is indeed a passage towards the end of the fourth book, where the Wanderer introduces the simile of a Boy and the Shell that has something ordinarily (but absurdly) called Spinozistic. But the intelligent reader will easily see the dramatic propriety of the passage....She condemns me for not distinguishing between, Nature as the work of God, and God himself. But where does she find this doctrine inculcated? Whence does she gather that the author of the Excursion looks upon Naute and God as

the same? He does not indeed consider the Supreme Being as bearing the same relation to the Universe as a watchmaker bears to a watch. In fact there is nothing in the course of the religious education adopted in this country, and in the use made by us of the Holy Scriptures, that appears to me so injurious as perpetually talking about 'making by God'." (1)

CONCLUSION

The assumption with which this paper began was, that Wordsworth's idea of God could best be described by the term Immanence. Immanence was the essential element in the position of theism and while like pantheism, it held to the reality of God working and present in the world, it made room for an element of transendence in our view of Him, which was denied by Pantheism.

Wordsworth was so conscious of the reality of God in Nature and in Man, and he expressed it in such passionate terms that he was accused of Pantheism. It was necessary to point out that in his works he showed that the idea of transendence was present in his view of God.

It was pointed out that in those poems which came nearest to pantheism and were the occasion for misunderstanding him, there was not a completely closed door to

(1) Edith C. Batho "The Later Wordsworth" page 247

the possibility of an element of transendence.

Note was made of various changes made in revisions of the Prelude, by Wordsworth himself toward a more definite orthodox view point without sacrificing his doctrine of Immanence.

Numerous passages especially from the Prelude afford evidence that the transendent view was not lacking in his theology. Moreover a development in his thought was noted always toward a greater hospitality to the idea of God as to some extent above and apart from Nature and the world. The point is reached in the Prelude and other poems in which the relationship between God and Man is one of Love. The freedom of God's personality which can make Love possible in his relation to creation and man could not find room in a pantheistic theology. Love is the highest conception reached by Theism, and God's love for man is the deepest element in the idea of Immanence. Lastly a statement by Wordsworth himself stated his position clearly, and it is the position assumed at the beginning of this thesis.

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